GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Speech from the Throne

March 13, 2001

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Delivered at the Opening

of

The Third Session

of

The Forty-Fourth

General Assembly

of the

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

on Tuesday, March 13, 2001

by

His Honour

The Honourable A.M. House, C.M., M.D., LL.D., FRCPC

Lieutenant-Governor

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Welcome to the Third Session of this, the Forty-Fourth General Assembly.

Work Plan of Action

My Government has a new First Minister and today, My Government is setting out a clear work plan which will affirm public confidence as it completes the mandate given in the General Election of 1999.

A Period of Change, Confidence and Challenge

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are entering a period of change, confidence and challenge. It is imperative that we all work together to ensure that our hopes, dreams and aspirations are realized. Throughout this period, My Government will maintain and build on the trust that the people of our province have placed in us.

We will keep that trust with a plan of action that delivers results.

Our plan is based on the input of our people, and recognizes and builds upon the significant accomplishments that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians make to their communities, their province and their country.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

The United Nations has declared 2001 as the International Year of the Volunteer. As we celebrate this year, it is appropriate that we acknowledge the individual contributions that volunteers have made to our province.

My Government is proud that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are known throughout our country as caring, vibrant and compassionate people. Their efforts have truly made our province a beacon on the shores of the North Atlantic.

My Government wishes to recognize the immense talent, inspiration and ability of individuals, including volunteers, who make this province a better place to live.

The Order of Newfoundland and Labrador

My Government will introduce legislation to create the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. This Order will recognize individuals who have distinguished themselves by exceptional achievement and sacrifice, unique skills and talents, or by noteworthy contributions to their communities and province.

I look forward to the Order being established over the next few months and to serving as the Order's first Chancellor.

CHANGE

My Government is committed to making changes that ensure greater confidence in the institutions of government.

Greater Trust, Openness and Accountability

A key focus of My Government in this Session of the House of Assembly will be to create a greater level of trust, openness and accountability.

To ensure this, details of My Government's plan of action and accomplishments will be published and available to the people for their scrutiny.

Review of the Freedom of Information Act

My Government has already embarked upon an agenda of openness through the establishment of a review of the *Freedom of Information Act*. Once this review is completed, My Government will move expeditiously to bring forward changes to the current *Act*.

Creation of the Office of the Ombudsman

My Government will introduce legislation during this Session to create the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will be established as an Officer of the House of Assembly, and will have a mandate to hear public concerns regarding the administration of programs and services.

Timely release of Reports and Studies

My Government is also committed to the timely release of reports and studies prepared by or for government. The availability of such information will contribute to a greater understanding of any actions that My Government may take on behalf of the people of the province.

Televised proceedings of the House

My Government believes that this Honourable House must remain visible and relevant to the people. To this end, My Government will make provisions to have the proceedings of the House of Assembly televised, commencing with the Fall sitting.

New Focus on Issues Facing Youth and Women

My Government will embark on a new and focused plan to involve more youth and women in the operations and decisions of the government. It is time for real initiatives and meaningful mechanisms to be put in place to realize this objective.

Provincial Youth Advisory Committee

As part of our agenda of action, specific mechanisms will be put in place by the new Department of Youth Services and Post Secondary Education to encourage our youth to interact directly with My Government. We will listen and act upon the opinions and views put forward by our youth through the creation of a provincial youth advisory committee that will advise the new Department of Youth Services and Post Secondary Education.

Child Advocate

My Government will also be establishing a Child Advocate to advance the concerns and issues of our children. It is time that children had a real voice in government. The Advocate will offer advice on children's programs and services and will ensure that the interests of children are paramount in areas where government services impact directly upon the lives of our children.

Setting New Goals and Priorities on Women's Issues

My Government has embarked upon an extensive consultation process under the direction of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. This process will assist My Government in setting new goals and priorities on women's issues.

Empowering Rural Communities

My Government will also direct greater attention to empowering our rural communities. A key element will be the focus on investment and growth in all regions of the province, most particularly those rural areas which have not fully benefited from recent growth.

My Government will rely on the opinions and advice of our people throughout the province. There will be a sharper focus on regional development priorities through a more proactive relationship with the Regional Economic Development Boards.

As a real demonstration of our commitment to promoting local initiatives, My Government will host a Rural Forum and Exposition in Gander, later this year. Rural EXPO 2001 will showcase business accomplishments in all areas of the province and encourage further investment. The Exposition will also have a particular emphasis on our province's young leaders and entrepreneurs.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the availability of services throughout our province. My Government will provide the tools for communities and regions to control and shape their own futures.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

CONFIDENCE

The economy is stronger and more diversified than it was even a few short years ago. This has led to a "can do" philosophy which is becoming the norm. My Government will reflect this new confidence and attitude in its actions.

My Government believes that confidence is built when more people are fully aware of the plan of their government. My Government is committed to providing more opportunities for our people to participate in the development and implementation of this plan.

Agenda of Action and Results

My Government will be immediately and aggressively implementing a new agenda of action. My Government has studied and consulted and it is now time for an agenda of action and results.

Jobs and Growth Strategy

The hallmark of our agenda will be a determined effort to continue economic momentum and ensure that all our people share in our province's progress. The strength of My Government's plan is based on the fact that it reflects the views of the people, and has the support of the public. This foundation was laid by My Government in 1999, with the release of a public consultation document on *Jobs and Growth*, 23 public consultation meetings and 10 sectoral forums.

Within the next few days, and in conjunction with the budget process, My Government will be articulating other specific *Jobs and Growth* priorities for action.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

New Structure of Government

My Government has significantly restructured government departments to reflect the priorities of the people and the needs of our province. These structural changes will be accompanied by sound policies which respond to challenges and take advantage of opportunities.

Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education

A new Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education has been established with a mandate to assist the province's youth in achieving their full potential and accessing opportunities arising from the new economy.

Student Investment Corporation

My Government will focus on creating opportunities for students to obtain meaningful employment that will facilitate their transition into the workplace upon graduation and enable them to contribute financially to their post-secondary education. A Student Investment Corporation will be established to develop a coordinated youth employment strategy.

My Government believes that a reduction of student debt must be a provincial and national priority. My Government has made a start. Timely completion of post-secondary programs results in almost no provincial debt. The only debt owed by a student is the Canada student loan portion. My Government will request that the federal government develop a similar loan remission forgiveness program.

Reducing Student Debt

To further address student debt, revisions to the Student Aid Program will be made. These revisions must take into account the specific challenges faced by students who must leave their communities in order to pursue a post-secondary education and who commonly have higher debt levels.

My Government has already frozen tuition for Memorial University for a three-year period, ending in 2001-2002. We will further reduce the burden on our students by reducing tuition at Memorial University, with the first reduction to commence in September 2001.

My Government has made it abundantly clear to the federal government that they must also ensure that post-secondary education becomes a spending priority. Throughout the 1990's, in the face of severe fiscal challenges, the federal government began to reduce financial transfers which could be used for post-secondary education. The change to the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1996 resulted in a further decline in funding. Now that financial forecasts have improved, My Government continues to press the federal government to restore funding to levels that existed in the early 1990s.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Environment

A new Department of Environment has been established to ensure environmental issues have a clear focus in, and remain a priority of My Government. The Department's exclusive function will be to provide sound environmental stewardship and regulation. As a priority, the new Department has been directed to bring forward a strategic plan of action to ensure public confidence in our water supplies.

My Government is also committed to addressing the issues surrounding solid waste management and the new Department has been mandated to develop a long term strategy in this area. We will be seeking the views of the people, municipalities and other interested parties on how the province should move forward on this issue.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Labour

My Government is also committed to renewing its relationship with labour, business and community groups through the creation of a new Department of Labour with exclusive responsibility for labour and occupational health and safety matters.

Taking the necessary steps with labour and industry to ensure a stable and productive workforce for future offshore fabrication and major construction projects is a priority of My Government. A comprehensive report on these issues was recently received by My Government and is now under review. Building on this review, My Government will examine the need for amendments to the *Labour Relations Act* for presentation in this Session of the House.

Industry, Trade and Rural Development

A new Department of Industry, Trade and Rural Development has been established to bring together government's core business development functions in one department. It has a mandate to address business needs throughout our province, with a particular focus on rural areas. The Department will play a major role as a catalyst for the implementation of the comprehensive report on the renewal strategy for jobs and growth.

My Government will give greater attention to trade and export development as a means of creating new jobs and diversifying our economy. Subject to federal participation, this will be achieved through a new initiative, Trade Team Newfoundland and Labrador, involving federal and provincial government departments as well as industry associations, regional development boards, municipalities and other key stakeholders.

Trade Team Newfoundland and Labrador

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

A new Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs has been created to reflect a strengthened commitment in dealing with issues of concern to Labrador and Aboriginal peoples. A priority of the new Department will be to ensure that the people who live in Labrador share in the development of the area's wealth of resources. It will also provide leadership in advancing major economic development opportunities in Labrador.

Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

This new Department demonstrates My Government's resolve to address Aboriginal issues. The Department will be responsible for negotiating and implementing comprehensive land claims and self-government agreements with the Labrador Inuit Association and Innu Nation and it will act as the coordinating agency for My Government in dealing with all matters of concern to Aboriginal peoples.

My Government will continue to pursue federal approval for the registration of the Innu Nation. Land claim negotiations with the Innu Nation were postponed recently by the federal

government in order to concentrate efforts on the registration of the Innu Nation as status Indians under the *Indian Act*, and on the solvent abuse problems in Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet.

My Government has recently initiated a public consultation on the Labrador Inuit Association land claims position. Upon conclusion of this consultation process My Government will continue negotiations with the Labrador Inuit Association and the federal government.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

CHALLENGE

There is renewed confidence in the province. We have made good progress in strengthening our province. We should take pride in our accomplishments.

Challenges remain, and we still have critical choices to make. The right choices will propel us forward. The wrong choices will stall or reverse the gains that our people have already made.

Fuel Regulation

Legislation will be introduced in this sitting of the House of Assembly to regulate the price of fuel. The regulatory regime provided for by this legislation will assure the public that fuel prices are set in a rational and fair manner.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Realizing our Economic Potential

Economic indicators suggest that 2000 was our third consecutive year of strong economic growth, with real GDP increasing by about five percent. This follows six percent growth in both 1999 and 1998. The export sector accounted for about two-thirds of growth last year, spurred by increased oil and iron ore production. Record levels of newsprint production and non-resident tourism also contributed. The value of manufacturing shipments exceeded $2 billion for the first time ever. Most indicators of economic activity recorded solid gains for last year. Taken together, the last three years show the best three-year economic performance the province has had in more than twenty-five years.

The outlook for 2001 and the following years is positive. Most private forecasters expect the province to record strong growth again this year. Although some industries, such as the fishery, still face challenges, the continuing diversification of our economy gives reason for continued optimism in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government is committed to a growth agenda which develops a balanced investment prospecting agenda that reflects and matches the needs and opportunities of all regions of the province. The EDGE program will be refocused and enhanced to target investment opportunities that would not otherwise be directed to our province.

Small Scale Manufacturing Strategy

My Government has adopted a small scale manufacturing strategy that focuses on helping firms adopt the best manufacturing practices, team based management techniques, new

production technologies, ISO certification, export marketing expertise, and e-commerce methods. The new Department of Industry, Trade and Rural Development will ensure that this strategy is a priority of My Government.

Renewed Information Technology Strategy

My Government will renew its Information Technology strategy to ensure growth, as our IT industry continues to mature. Specific objectives will be established in consultation with the private sector and other stakeholders that will focus on priorities such as accelerating the use of IT in businesses in all areas of the province through e-commerce and addressing the human resource development challenges throughout the IT industry.

Cultural Industries

Newfoundland and Labrador has a rich cultural heritage that defines us as a people and shapes our identity on the national and international stage. This uniqueness and creativity also provides new opportunities in an economic development context. My Government is preparing an overall development framework for our cultural industries that will be released this year.

Rising business confidence, oil industry development, and public infrastructure projects are spurring capital spending. Construction investment last year was the fourth highest on record at almost $2.1 billion. Total capital investment, including construction investment, exceeded $3 billion for the second straight year.

After posting strong growth in 1998 and 1999, employment remained stable in 2000, at one of the highest levels in a decade. Lower employment in goods producing industries, such as the fisheries, offset job gains elsewhere. Personal income, however, increased by 3.7 percent while tax cuts allowed disposable income to grow at a faster rate of 4.9 percent.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

My Government will continue to argue for an equalization formula that is responsive to our growing economy and the needs of our people.

Equalization

My Government will aggressively pursue the federal government to fulfill its commitment to work with the province on a fairer equalization formula. My Government will continue to advocate for a long term and equitable revision to the current equalization program that includes the removal of the present payment ceiling and changes to the claw back rate. These changes are critical as they would have a substantial impact on the level of funding this province receives from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

One of My Government's challenges is to maximize the benefits of our strong economy so that all regions and all residents share in the opportunities of this growth. One of the ways My Government is meeting this objective is through a responsive tax regime.

Responsive Tax Regime

My Government has instituted tax initiatives to stimulate business growth. Our corporate income tax regime is among the most competitive in the country. In the last Session of the House of Assembly the payroll tax exemption threshold for businesses in the province

was increased from $150,000 to $400,000. This initiative alone exempted 1300 businesses from the payroll tax.

Another measure My Government has adopted in support of small business is the venture capital tax credit program. The Direct Equity Tax Credit and the Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Tax Credit are designed to stimulate the growth of small business and new jobs in expanding areas of the economy, with a particular focus on the needs of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

These tax measures and other initiatives such as the Seed Capital Equity Program and the Business and Market Development Equity Program address the challenges small business and entrepreneurs face as they pursue new ideas and opportunities.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Managing our Natural Resources

Our future prosperity is not only dependent on nickel, petroleum or hydro-electricity. More than at any time in our history, our economy is diverse and dynamic. Our future prosperity, however, will depend on what we secure from resource developments. We must encourage the skills and technology of tomorrow, not yesterday.

Oil

Hibernia has set records and exceeded expectations. Estimates of recoverable reserves have increased from 666 million to 884 million barrels. The annual production limit has been raised from 50 million barrels to 66 million barrels. An agreement secured by My Government

ensures that Newfoundland and Labrador shares in the benefit of increased production. Terra Nova will achieve first oil in 2001, adding 115,000 barrels of oil per day to our total petroleum production. A development plan application for White Rose has been filed. If regulatory approval is given, first oil is expected by 2004. Hebron/Ben Nevis may follow shortly thereafter. Chevron is evaluating several development options. If economic viability is confirmed, front-end engineering could begin this year. Onshore, we have received an application for development at Port-au-Port.

The momentum we enjoy today is a product of yesterday's hard work. To lay a foundation for tomorrow, we must encourage further exploration and continue to develop our human resources and infrastructure. My Government will do this work.

Natural Gas

My Government has worked with industry, the federal government and other interested parties in studying the potential of our natural gas resources. Shortly, My Government will be releasing, for public comment, a comprehensive natural gas strategy. My Government will encourage early development, but not at the expense of our long term interests.

Voisey's Bay

My Government sees opportunity in the development of the resources at Voisey's Bay. We have the confidence to move forward and will resume negotiations. We are not afraid to reach a deal because no deal will be signed that cannot be clearly explained and defended. My Government has one basic objective for the negotiations. Any deal must provide maximum benefits for Newfoundland and Labrador. This includes a processing facility which can serve as the foundation of an industry which will extend beyond the life of the mine.

Mining and Minerals Tax Review

My Government will undertake a comprehensive review of our mining and minerals tax. We will focus on changes that are necessary to encourage greater exploration investment in our province while ensuring that the province receives its fair share from the development of our mineral resources.

Lower Churchill Development

My Government remains patient with respect to the development of the Lower Churchill River. Disappointment and delay will not pressure us into a quick deal. New project concepts are being assessed. An announcement on the future direction of negotiations with Quebec will be made after this work has been completed.

Forest Resources in Labrador

The full-scale development of the forest resources in Labrador offers tremendous potential and benefits. My Government will actively pursue development of a forest products industry in Labrador in consultation with local communities and Aboriginal peoples. My Government's recently signed forestry management agreement with the Innu Nation is an important part of the development of a forest management plan that will advance the development of the Labrador forest industry.

Growth and Diversification Investment Initiative for Agrifoods

Our agrifoods industry has been growing steadily in both traditional and new products over the past ten years. The value of primary agricultural production combined with food processing is close to $500 million. The argrifoods industry in this province has unlimited potential. Consumer demand is growing for high value speciality crops such as organically grown food and nutraceutical/medicinal products, some of which can be grown better in our province than elsewhere. My Government will support the implementation of industry driven action plans for growth and diversification through a comprehensive Growth and Diversification Investment Initiative for Agrifoods.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Fishery

Great progress has been made in the recovery of the province's fishery over the past few years, with the value of exports at an all time high in 2000.

Fish landings in 2000 were on par with 1999. In 2000, landed values increased to $585 million, up by $79 million or sixteen percent from 1999, due to higher prices for crab and increased landings of shrimp.

The level of cooperation among the key stakeholders is also high. My Government is committed to working with these groups and individuals to carefully foster greater cooperation.

My Government will need to increase our efforts to ensure that federal actions do not further jeopardize our historic access to our resource. My Government is committed to a vigorous examination of the adjacency principle to ensure our approach protects the viability of rural communities. We must ensure a regional balance is achieved within our province, while maintaining the viability of the industry and continuing to address issues of over-capacity in the processing sector. My Government will review its present fish processing licensing policy to ensure that these objectives are being achieved. My Government will also encourage the federal government to do the same with regard to its overall harvesting licencing policy.

My Government will continue to work closely with industry to build on the significant progress made in quality assurance throughout the industry, as greater economic benefits can still be gained from the present fisheries if quality continues to improve.

Aquaculture Development Strategy

A more strategic focus will be placed on investments in our aquaculture industry. My Government has recently adopted a new Aquaculture Development Strategy which has, as its key policy direction, a focus on commercialization of four species - steelhead trout, Atlantic salmon, blue mussels and cod grow-out enterprises.

Tourism

Tourism remains one of the fastest growing and exciting industries in the province. Since 1997, visitations to this province have increased by 32 percent. In 2000, more than 415,000 people journeyed to this province to enjoy our culture and heritage, the beauty of our coastlines and our friendly people. This increase is unprecedented and it is built on the achievement of entrepreneurs and government working together to promote and develop Newfoundland and Labrador as a premiere tourism destination.

Natural Areas System Plan

Recognizing that the natural beauty and pristine environment of Newfoundland and Labrador are essential to our tourism industry, My Government will be developing and releasing a Natural Areas System Plan for the province. This plan will help to preserve representative samples of our province's ecosystem and sensitive ecological sites.

We have made impressive strides in tourism in recent years. Awareness of the province and its unique products has grown through our Special Celebrations.

Celebrating Marconi

In 2001, My Government has planned a year of celebration to bring global attention to Marconi's accomplishment and to Newfoundland and Labrador's remarkable history and participation in communications. My Government will also be hosting "Receiving the World: Celebrating Communications," an international communications technology conference. This conference and year long celebrations will help us commemorate on December 12, 2001, the 100th Anniversary of the first transatlantic signal received by Marconi on Signal Hill.

As a priority in the coming year, My Government will review our tourism marketing strategy and develop a plan which allows the province to build the recent successes of special celebrations into an effective longer term marketing plan.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Health Care - Building a Strategic Plan

My Government is working toward building sustainable regions which have vibrant communities and an important part of that strategy is having individuals who are healthy and well-educated.

My Government is continuing its commitment to ensure the people of this province have access to services and programs enabling them to enjoy good health and well-being. In achieving this goal, My Government will strengthen partnerships with communities, have evidence-based decision-making, focus on the determinants of health in a holistic way, and integrate regional planning, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services.

My Government will ensure that these programs and services meet the needs of the people by stabilizing the operating budgets of our health care boards. My Government continues to regard improving the health of our people and the quality of our health care services as a top priority. In recent years, My Government has made significant financial investments in health care. Today, forty-two cents of every program dollar spent in this province is invested in health care.

This year the Minister of Health and Community Services will play a lead role nationally as the Provincial/Territorial Co-Chair of Ministers Responsible for Health, to ensure that the federal government's commitment to health funding through the Canada Health and Social Transfer are fully met.

Early this year, My Government will bring forward its plans for spending on key elements of the federal/provincial agreement targeted at early childhood development, medical equipment and primary health care. Each of these plans will strengthen our approach to areas of strategic importance. For example, new medical equipment, with other provincial budget commitments in this area, will help reduce waiting lists for diagnostic services and reduce the length of stays in hospitals.

My Government is committed to having qualified people, in the right place, at the right time so that our health care system can respond to the needs of our people.

Community Based Health

My Government will give greater emphasis over time to community-based health services and population health programs. This proactive approach to the delivery of health care will help ease the financial burdens that are associated with the institutional approach and give

greater attention to the determinants of health in our population. In the last sitting of the House of Assembly, My Government tabled a report that addressed home support and home care issues. My Government will give priority to addressing these issues, such as the inadequate level of compensation that many of our home support and home care workers are paid.

A major initiative of My Government in the coming year will be to build a vision for health care and community services for the future. The Minister of Health and Community Services will conduct a province-wide series of regional health forums where community partners can help government shape this vision. Future health care and community services must be based on shared values and approaches, and we are committed to finding the right balance among service delivery approaches which provide quality and accessibility.

Regional Health Forums

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

My Government has made significant changes in the structure and delivery of our education system. The restructured Department of Education is responsible for the provision of affordable, high quality primary, elementary, and secondary education to the children of the province, including early childhood education. By placing early childhood education with the Department of Education, special attention can be focussed on the conditions that contribute to high scholastic achievement and ensure our children's best chances at entrance into advanced studies, and the workforce.

Educating our Children

The Report of the Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom has presented us with an opportunity to renew and improve our educational system. My

Government is proceeding to expeditiously implement the Ministerial Panel's recommendations.

My Government will also be implementing a long term strategy to give real meaning to the Strategic Literacy Plan, "Words To Live By". An interdepartmental committee will be established by My Government to contribute to the implementation strategy and oversee its progress.

Distance education presents both a significant challenge and opportunity for meeting the needs of students in geographically dispersed areas of the province. My Government is committed to the implementation of the new Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation. This Centre will provide many of our students with the tools they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Strategic Social Plan - a Proactive Approach

My Government continues to move aggressively in implementing its Strategic Social Plan, a proactive way to work with citizens to address social and economic issues together.

My Government will build on the critically important linkages between social and economic investments at the regional and community levels through improved integration of programs and services. Regional steering committees to foster long-term regional strategies and partnerships for social development are now in place.

In this International Year of the Volunteer, My Government will place a particular focus on strengthening our relationship with the volunteer sector which has played a strong and crucial role in improving the lives of our people.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

My Government is committed to doing things differently. Today I have presented an overview of our work plan. It is an ambitious plan of action - one that will require a total commitment by all groups in our province if our hopes, dreams and aspirations are to be fulfilled.

Ambitious Work Plan - Our Hopes, Dreams and Aspirations are to be fulfilled

This is a bold and ambitious agenda and one which we will achieve. The problems and difficulties we face as a people require leadership and fundamental change. We must address our challenges, as the alternative is simply not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Estimates of Expenditures will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty. I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence your labours in this Third Session of the Forty-Fourth General Assembly. May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.